

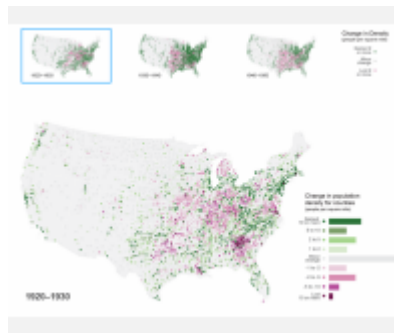
Geographic Mobility During Industrialization, the Depression, and WWII

Description:

Many political and economic events affect where people live and how they move. In this activity, students explore the changes in population density due to geographic mobility during three historic decades: 1920-1930 (Industrial Era), 1930-1940 (the Great Depression), and 1940-1950 (World War II). Students use population density maps from each of these three decades to identify major changes in geographic mobility from decade to decade and consider how the Industrial Era, Great Depression, and World War II influenced the major changes in geographic mobility.

Standard:

The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945) Standard 3: The causes and course of World War II, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the U.S. role in world affairs



Activity Instructions for Students

Historic periods in U. S. history have affected the geographic mobility and migration of the country's people. **Migration** refers to the movement of people within the United States from one location to another. People in the United States move from place to place for a variety of reasons, and historic events can be a contributing factor.

This activity examines geographic mobility and migration during three periods in U.S. history:

- **1920-1930** – During this decade, the United States continued a trend of urbanization and many people changed from agricultural to industrial work.
- **1930-1940** – During this decade, the fallout from a severe economic collapse led to the Great Depression, a time of high unemployment and devastating effects on the American and global economies.
- **1940-1950** – During this decade, World War II solidified the nation's role as a global power and led to a variety of effects on the American economy after WWII ended the Depression.

In this activity, you will analyze population density maps of the United States from the three time periods mentioned above. Compare and contrast the maps, paying close attention to major changes in population density as evidenced by dark green dots (increased population density) and dark purple dots (decrease in population density). Consider the movement of the population across rural, urban, and suburban regions of the country and answer the questions in the "Activity Assessment" section of the activity.

Activity Assessment

1. From 1920-1930, which regions of the U.S. had the most growth? Which regions had declines in population? Or was there a lack of movement in U.S. regions? Did you notice major or minor changes in this time period?

A number of predominately rural counties saw declines in population density (purple in the Midwest and southeast), as many people moved to more urban areas (more dark green in northern cities). During this time, many Southern African-Americans moved north and west during an agricultural depression as well as a time of the mechanization of farming.

2. How might the changes you noticed from 1920-1930 be explained by the occurrence of industrialization?

With the incorporation of machines into large-scale manufacturing, many people moved from farms (agricultural work) to cities to find industrial work in factories and warehouses.

3. From 1930-1940, which regions of the U.S. had the most growth? Which regions had declines in population? Did regions stay the same? Did you notice major or minor changes in this period?

There was a lull in internal migration as indicated by the lack of dark green and dark purple dots. If students have trouble seeing this, have them compare the dark green and dark purple dots to the 1920-1930 map. Students should note that the Northeast still saw significant population gain, in spite of the large economic downturn.

4. How might the changes you noticed from 1930-1940 be explained by the occurrence of the Great Depression?

Due to financial insecurity, many people likely could not have afforded to move. During the Great Depression, jobs were scarce and the national and world economies suffered a huge downturn.

5. From 1940-1950, which regions of the U.S. had the most growth? Which regions had declines in population? Or was there a lack of movement in U.S. regions? Did you notice major or minor changes in this period?

There was an increase in geographic mobility during this decade; many counties in the Midwest saw outmigration while much of the northeast saw significant numbers of people move into their area. Additionally, the west coast of the U.S. shows many counties with a large net increase in population. During this time, there was renewed movement of African-Americans from the South to the North and West.

6. How might the changes you noticed from 1940-1950 be explained by the occurrence of World War II?

During war, geographic mobility could occur due to internal movement to war production centers or women moving to take jobs previously held by men who were sent to the war. The process of demobilization of the armed forces took place along the East, West, and Gulf Coasts, which are places that show growth on the map. Additionally, after the war's conclusion, there would have been many people moving throughout the country looking for new opportunities brought by the booming economy.

Teacher's Notes

Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to analyze, compare, and interpret population density maps from three historic periods during U.S. history.
- Students will be able to identify and define geographic mobility.
- Students will become familiar with 3 historic events and analyze how and why they affect geographic mobility.

Instructions for Teachers

This activity requires the use of a computer to use the interactive map.

Before this Activity

As a prerequisite to this activity, students should have a general understanding of the origins of the economic and political changes of the Industrial Era, Great Depression, and World War II.

During this Activity

Have students read the “Activity Instructions for Students” and access the “Before and After 1940: Changes in Population Density” data visualization.

Allow students to read and understand the maps by reviewing the map legends (bottom right) with them at first. Have students notice that the bottom-right legend for each map displays a histogram which changes for each map according to the number of counties which fall into the specified population change categories.

Have students make some observations about the changes in population density from map to map and identify any trends they think they see.

Have students respond individually or in small groups to the “Activity Assessment” questions provided as they review the population density maps from three time periods: 1920-1930, 1930-1940, and 1940-1950.

After this Activity

Hold a discussion with students about their responses - incorporating their ideas about these three historic periods and how they influenced geographic mobility.

Optional Activity Extension

Have students explore the “Accessibility Data” spreadsheet (accessed by clicking on the link on the bottom left corner of the data visualization). Have students look for specific counties with very large increases or decreases in population from one decade to another. Have students conduct research about the possible reasons for those large population movements into or out of the county.

Interactive map